

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1103

As of February 21, 2014

Title: An act relating to uniform ballot design.

Brief Description: Concerning uniform ballot design.

Sponsors: House Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Representatives Van De Wege, S. Hunt, Stanford, Liias, Hayes, Morrell, Appleton, Fitzgibbon, Hudgins, Reykdal and Bergquist).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/07/13, 77-20; 1/27/14, 67-29.

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 3/19/13, 2/20/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The Secretary of State (Secretary) is authorized to inspect, evaluate, test, and approve voting systems for use in the state. A county may use any election system approved by the Secretary. No system may be used unless it has been certified by an independent testing authority designated by the United States Election Assistance Commission. The Secretary may not approve a system unless it:

- provides for voter secrecy;
- permits the voter to vote for any candidate or measure;
- correctly registers all votes cast for any candidate or measure; and
- prevents casting a vote for more than one candidate by a single operation of the voting system, except for President and Vice President of the United States.

Four different voting systems are currently used in the state:

- the Hart voting system, which requires the voter to fill in a rectangle for a response, and is used by 24 counties;
- the Election System and Software Unity voting system requires voters to fill in an oval for a response, and is used by nine counties;
- the WinEDS 4.0 voting system, which requires the voter to connect an arrow for a response, and is used by five counties; and
- the Assure 1.2 voting system, which also requires the voter to fill in an oval for a response, and is used by King County.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: The Secretary, in conjunction with the Washington State Association of County Auditors, must develop a uniform ballot format to be used by all counties by the year 2022 or upon replacement of vote-tallying equipment, whichever occurs first.

The Secretary may, in conjunction with the Department of Enterprise Services and in consultation with county auditors, develop a master contract for vote-tallying equipment for purchase by counties.

Each county auditor may establish an equipment replacement fund which must be used explicitly to replace vote-tallying equipment. Only the county auditor may authorize expenditures from the fund. Election billing charges must be sufficient to fund voting system equipment replacement no later than 2022.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

Testimony From 2013 Regular Session.

PRO: The purpose and hope behind this bill is that it will save some money. Allowing a statewide contract for printing would bring down costs. The county auditors are very pleased with this bill, but have one concern about the mandated deadline, since the voting systems are at different points in their useful life. Backing off the time mandate would be appreciated.

Testimony From 2014 Regular Session.

PRO: This bill is about cost savings to local governments and ballot familiarity statewide. Having a statewide ballot will reduce costs to counties, which are struggling. This will also make it easier to vote if people move within Washington. With different ballot designs in different counties, it can be confusing for voters.

Persons Testifying:

Persons Testifying From 2013 Regular Session.

PRO: Representative Van De Wege, prime sponsor; Monty Cobb, WA Assn. of County Officials.

Persons Testifying From 2014 Regular Session.

PRO: Representative Van De Wege, prime sponsor.